

Baby walkers are dangerous as they allow infants to move more quickly around the house

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baby walkers

SAFETY FOR KIDS

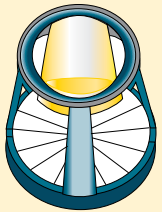
*in the home 





Baby walkers have been a popular nursery item on the Australian market for about 30 years. There is growing concern, in Australia and overseas, about the dangers associated with baby walkers due to the high number of injuries related to their use. Most of the injuries are to the head and are suffered by children under 12 months of age. Baby walkers prematurely enable children to move freely and quickly around a room and provide very limited protection from hazards.

Ensure that your baby walker has the following features



Stationary activity centre does not have wheels

Features, such as a gripping mechanism, minimise the risk of falls down steps

Too wide to fit through doorway.

baby walkers

Preventing injuries to infants

All new and second-hand baby walkers supplied in trade or commerce in Western Australia from 1 November 2002 must meet mandatory safety standards.

These standards aim to limit the risks of serious injury but do not replace the need for babies to be closely supervised when using a baby walker.

Compulsory safety features required to meet the mandatory safety standard include:

- Stability – special features to minimise the risk of the baby walker tipping over either forwards, backwards or sideways – achieved through a wide base.
- Minimisation of the risk of falls down stairs – normally achieved by friction strips or some other form of braking mechanism on the undercarriage that operates when the edge of the walker moves over a step.
- Product warnings – consumer safety warnings state that a child should never be left unattended.

Before you buy:

- Give some thought to the alternative types of products that are likely to be just as entertaining but safer. Stationary activity centres for infants are now available and child safety specialists recommend them as a safer alternative to baby walkers.
- Look for a label indicating that the baby walker complies with the mandatory Australian safety standard for baby walkers based on the US ASTM F977 safety standard.

For extra safety checks:

- Make sure your baby fits properly into the baby walker and it supports your baby's weight.
- Make sure your baby's feet can touch the floor while sitting in the walker.
- Look for a baby walker with a wide base for stability and big wheels at least 50mm in diameter.
- Check for any finger, arm or leg traps, sharp edges or pinch points.

How to make your home environment baby walker safe:

- Do not let your baby have access to areas which are not baby walker safe (eg slopes, sharp edges, hot items).
- Only use the baby walker on flat, level surfaces.
- Place child resistant barriers at the top of stairs.
- Block access to open sliding glass doors or windows at floor level. Sliding aluminium tracks can cause walkers to topple.
- Block access to heaters and fireplaces and check for electrical cords on floors that could cause the baby walker to topple.
- Remove hazards that a child in a baby walker could have access to. As a guide, look at things that are less than 900mm from the floor.
- Remove or tack down the edges of loose rugs or carpets.
- Never use baby walkers in kitchens, bathrooms or laundries – there are too many hazards.
- Never carry a baby walker while a child is in it, as it could cause a fall-related injury.
- Follow the safety instructions provided with the baby walker, especially those for locking the frame into position and adjusting the seat.
- **Most importantly, never leave a baby unsupervised in a baby walker!**